

THE BUILDER,

NO. 11.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 1843.

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

A SPECIAL meeting of this Institute was held on Monday at one o'clock, to present the medals awarded during the session, when his Royal Highness Prince Albert, patron, took the chair. The Prince, who arrived two minutes before his time, was attended by Lord Liverpool and Colonel Bower. Mr. Donaldson, foreign secretary, read letters from Herr J. C. de Lassaulx, Signor Canina, Signor Albertoli, and Mr. De Bret, accompanying some very handsome donation-books. Mr. Fowler, honorary secretary, having read Bacon's description of a princely palace. Mr. Arthur Johnson was presented to the Prince as the author of the best design founded on that description, and received the Soane medalion. In like manner, his Royal Highness presented to Mr. Edward Chamberlain the medal of the Institute; and to Mr. J. W. Papworth, the medal of merit for essays on synchronism in connection with architecture. Mr. Baily announced the subject for essays and drawings for which the council proposed to offer medals next year (which we will give in our next), and then read a communication from Mr. Charles Parker on the methods employed in constructing foundations in Venice, the soil of which city is of a nature to require the greatest care, and yet where failure is seldom if ever seen. Thanks having been voted to the author of the paper, Mr. Barry addressed the Prince in the name of the Institute, and assured his Royal Highness that the remembrance of the day, and of the kind manner in which his Royal Highness had fulfilled its duties, would long remain in the memory of the members. The Prince replied—"Gentlemen, it gives me pleasure to have this opportunity of meeting you." The Prince examined the collection of casts and models belonging to the Institute, and seemed fully to enter into all the matters which came before him.—*Times*.

So far for the ordinary way of disposing of such matters; but we must enter upon a more appropriate and fitting manner of recording what pertains to the chief council or court of the chief art of a refined and cultivated people.

What can present a more lively exponent of the position which architecture has hitherto held in the estimation not only of the general public and the press, which mirrors them, but of its professors themselves, when a very moderate paragraph, like the one we have extracted, serves to dispose of the annual general meeting of the INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS? Why, it is disposed of with as little ceremony and less parade than a coroner's inquest; that which ought to have its Hansard, and a volume, exists in a fugitive notice of a few daily and weekly newspapers; that which ought to have its privileged and solemn jurisdiction and records, its missives and its archives, its court and council, its special reporting, and to command a grave and deep interest from the outer world, it being a world within, commands an annual board assembly somewhat equal to the weekly gathering of an insurance direction, or that of a parish vestry, or a board of guardians; has a tolerably decent suite of rooms, if we were talking of an auctioneer or a manufacturer's show-rooms; a modest annual report or circular, and a closet-shelf full of its proceedings! it catches a condescending notice from the gentlemen reporters, who depute some raw recruit of their staff to break his hand in at this little job, while they pursue the more important routine of police offices, sessions, parish sittings, and the like, and the great public eye is satisfied with one twinkle of recognition, to note that there is such a thing in existence as an obscure body of men, lately, very lately, strong enough to organize themselves into a "society," or to attempt it, and to meet once a month or so, in corresponding obscurity, in a moderately re-

spectable quarter of London; but beyond all this, nobody cares or seems to care for, or to estimate as of much consequence, any thing of them, their sayings or doings. Such is the present condition, or a type of the condition, of what pertains to this master art in this roaster nation of this enlightened and advanced era, this boasted nineteenth century!

Is this, or is it not a reproach, and upon whom is the reproach to fall? Has the public demanded more than this; and if not, what is to be said of it? Has the profession deserved more, and if not, what is to be said of it? Is there any thing for either to blame itself upon? We opine not; and now let us ask, what is the remedy?

The best remedy is to carry out with all possible expedition that which this day and occasion promises a good commencement of. Let the Institute descend from its visionary and ascend its real eminence—let them imitate the example of the Prince Consort, who, in the language of comely compliment, may be said to have condescended, but who, in truth, has honoured himself in meeting them; let the Institute secure to itself the honour of breaking down, as the Prince has done, all the false barriers of conventional distinction. He sees enough in the art to cause him to fraternize with its honoured professors. He would be ashamed to stand, or to affect to stand, above its humblest member. He evinces his reverence for the art by coming unreservedly among the men who designate themselves its professors, not caring to know whether all, and how many have shewn themselves its practitioners. He brings with him no standard of exclusion—no gauge of admeasurement—his heart and hand are open to the common subjects of the sovereign (artistic and politic) of our common fealty. Let his example, we say, operate with the Institute over which he this day presided, and let them in time look to and fraternize with, it may be the humbly pretending, but after all the equal brotherhood—gradations and rank are accidental, they are not the necessities of art—the architect, like the poet, may be and most frequently is the child of humblest worldly rank, but of lordly inspirations. The architect earns his own fame; it is not conferred on him by rule, and vote, and ballot. Open wide your doors, and make the passport honour, fidelity, trust. In this will be your own security, in this alone consistency.

Why, there are hundreds of men at this time in England, and no disparagement to your worthy body, who are as well entitled to any honorary or actual privilege of the Institute as the best amongst you, builders and workmen; and sooner or later this opinion, now hazarded, or rather deliberately recorded, will be confirmed. Your charter will be found too narrow—too sectarian—yourselves must merge into the Catholic, or rather be absorbed in the working of a Catholic principle.

It is not in the language or the spirit of reproach that we have thus commented on the interesting subject before us. We have too much respect, too much of that feeling which we so admire in your princely president, to suffer our minds to be warped by personal considerations, exterior or interior. The Institute has our special reverence, our sincere affection and respect, and we are jealous of any thing that militates or appears to militate against its dignity, purity, and efficiency.

Abating all considerations arising out of the past, we cannot refrain from a special word in our own way, as to the proceedings of this day's meeting. We know it will be interest-

ing to our readers to be more familiarly introduced to the Institute than through the medium of these frigid and formal newspaper reports; but we dare not lift the veil too abruptly or too freely. Suffice it to say, that the Prince departed himself like a perfect gentleman, and evidently felt himself in place. There were some almost profuse presents of foreign works, in addition to those already mentioned, from the Duke of Serradifalco, and the Chevalier de Camina. The papers read were extremely interesting, especially that quosid one of the illustrious Bacon, because it referred to some beautiful drawings by Mr. Johnson, who had taken the great philosopher as his patron, and designed a palace to his instructions; right well did this young gentleman deserve the greetings of the Prince, the distinction of the Institute, and the applause of the meeting. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Papworth, Jun., were in their order introduced to "the chair," and met with similar greeting and applause. The latter gentleman wore several medals of the Institute on his breast with becoming and modest pride; and we could not help sharing with his father, who was an early worker, if not a principal in the founding of the Institute, in the feeling of fond satisfaction which evidently pervaded his breast at the well-merited gleanings of the junior from his parental sowings.

The following are some of the members who were present in addition to the names already mentioned:—

P. Hardwick, V.P.; E. Blore, J. Angell, Thomas Bellamy, H. E. Kendall, J. Crane, Professor Hosking, J. J. Scoles, G. Mair, J. H. Good, W. Greiber, G. Smith, J. B. Papworth, George Moore, W. Pocock, G. Godwin, Arthur Mee, W. Hurst, J. Shaw, Joseph Kay; Samuel Ware, G. B. Greenough, the Rev. R. Burgess. Honorary members.

THE demand that is being made upon us from many quarters, to commence our promised series of illustrations of practical building art, is one which, although replied to in the detail of our correspondence, calls for an additional notice in this place, because we know it is much talked of out of doors. We are not going to be very saughty or pig-headed (to use a homely phrase), but we must tell our readers, that we will not stir in this matter till we see it prudent to do so. We have to calculate upon sustaining the task when we once begin. We have to consider the general interest of the paper, and of our readers, and having all the circumstances before us, we think we are exercising a sound judgment between all parties by deferring, as we are doing, to enter upon the part of our duty in question.

Here we are at the ninth number, after a short existence of so many weeks; and many of our friends are becoming impatient, like children, for the curtain to be drawn up, that they may see the whole show. We really cannot gratify them; and if we did, we suspect, it would be something of the show-like character—one or two brilliant peeps and an end of it. There are many reasons besides why we should be deliberate and circumspect. Our calculations are being very nicely verified as to what the paper is to become; but many builders and others who would now be its readers are not aware of its existence; and reverting to the similitude of the show and the curtain, we say, would you have the play begin before the audience are seated? At present we have nearly attained the sale of 3,000 copies; but our starting point is nearer 5,000. Although we expect that we shall surprise and